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WHITTIER

BY

MRS. JAMES T. FIELDS

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WHITTIER

NOTES OF HIS LIFE AND OF HIS FRIENDSHIPS

BY

MRS. JAMES T. FIELDS

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK
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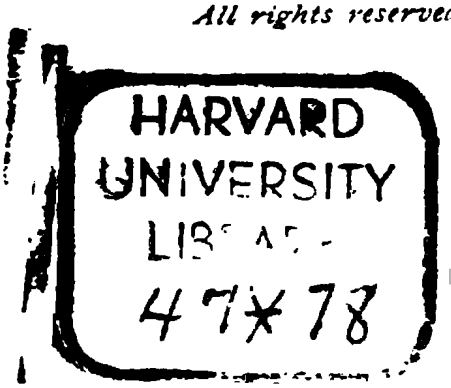

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"The poet of New England. His genius drew its nourishment from her soil; his pages are a mirror of her outward nature, and the strong utterance of her inward life."

FRANCIS PARKMAN.

"We already see, and the future will see it more clearly, that no party ever did a vaster work than his party; that he, like Hampden and Milton, is a character not produced in common times."

E. C. STEDMAN.

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WHITTIER

NOTES OF HIS LIFE AND OF HIS FRIENDSHIPS

THE figure of the Quaker poet, as he stood before the world, was unlike that of any other prominent figure which has walked across the stage of life. This may be said, of course, of every individual; yet the likenesses between men of a given era, or between modern men of strong character and those of the ancient world, cause us sometimes to exclaim with wonder at the evident repetitions in development. One can hardly walk through the galleries of antique statues, nor read the passages of Plutarch or Thucydides, without finding this idea thrust upon the mind. But with regard to Whittier, such comparisons were

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never made, even in fancy. His lithe, upright form, full of quick movement, his burning eye, his keen wit, bore witness to a contrast in himself with the staid, controlled manner and the habit of the sect into which he was born. The love and devotion with which he adhered to the Quaker Church and doctrines served to accentuate his unlikeness to the men of his time, because he early became also one of the most determined contestants in one of the sternest combats which the world has witnessed.

Neither in the ranks of poets nor divines nor philosophers do we find his counterpart. He felt a certain brotherhood with Robert Burns, and early loved his genius; but where were two men more unlike? A kind of solitude of life and experience, greater than that which usually throws its shadow on the human soul, invested him in his passage through the world. The refinement of his education, the calm of nature by which, in youth, he was sur-

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rounded, the few books which he made his own, nearly all serious in their character, and the religious atmosphere in which he was nurtured, all tended to form an environment in which knowledge developed into wisdom, and the fiery soul formed a power to restrain or to express its force for the good of humanity.

But as surely as he was a Quaker, so surely also did he feel himself a part of the life of New England. He believed in the ideals of his time; the simple ways of living; the eager nourishing of all good things by the sacrifice of many private wishes; in short, he made one cause with Garrison and Phillips, Emerson and Lowell, Longfellow and Holmes. His standards were often different from those of his friends, but their ideals were on the whole made in common.

His friends were to Whittier, more than to most men, an unfailing source of daily happiness and gratitude. With the advance of years, and the death of his un-

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married sister, his friends became all in all to him. They were his mother, his sister, and his brother; but in a certain sense they were always friends of the imagination. He saw some of them only at rare intervals, and sustained his relations with them chiefly in his hurried correspondence. He never suffered himself to complain of what they were not; but what they were, in loyalty to chosen aims, and in their affection for him, was an unending source of pleasure. With the shortcomings of others he dealt gently, having too many shortcomings of his own, as he was accustomed to say, with true humility. He did not, however, look upon the failings of his friends with indifferent eyes. "How strange it is!" he once said. "We see those whom we love going to the very verge of the precipice of self-destruction, yet it is not in our power to hold them back!"

A life of invalidism made consecutive labor of any kind an impossibility. For

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years he was only able to write for half an hour or less, without stopping to rest, and these precious moments were devoted to some poem or other work for the press, which was almost his only source of income. His letters suffered, from a literary point of view; but they were none the less delightful to his friends; to the world of literature they are perhaps less important than those of most men who have achieved a high place.

Whittier was between twenty and thirty years of age when his family left the little farm near Haverhill, where he was born, and moved into the town of Amesbury, eight miles distant. Long before that period he had identified himself with the antislavery cause, and had visited, in the course of his ceaseless labors for the slaves, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington. These brief journeys bounded his travels in this world.

In the year 1843 he wrote anxiously to

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his publisher, Mr. Fields, "*I send* with this 'The Exiles,' a kind *of John Gilpin* legend. I am in doubt about *it.* Read it, and decide for thyself whether *it* is worth printing."

He began at this rather late period (he was then thirty-six years old) to feel a touch of satisfaction in his comparatively new occupation of writing poetry, and to speak of it without reserve to his chosen friends. His poems were then beginning to bring him into personal relation with the reading world. Many years later, when speaking of the newspaper writing which absorbed his earlier life, he said that he had written a vast amount for the press; he thought that his work would fill nearly ten octavo volumes; but he had grown utterly weary of throwing so much out into space from which no response ever came back to him. At length he decided to put it all aside, discovering that a power lay in him for more congenial labors.

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HOME AT AMESBURY

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From the moment of the publication of his second volume of poems, Whittier felt himself fairly launched upon a new career, and seemed to stand with a responsive audience before him. The poems "Toussaint L'Ouverture," "The Slave-ships," and others belonging to the same period, followed in quick succession. Sometimes they took the form of appeal, sometimes of sympathy, and again they are prophetic or dramatic. He hears the slave mother weep :

> "Gone—gone—sold and gone
> To the rice-swamp dank and lone,
> From Virginia's hills and waters—
> Woe is me, my stolen daughters!"

Such voices could not be silenced. Though men might turn away and refuse to read or to listen, the music once uttered rang out into the common air, and would not die.

A homely native wit pointed Whittier's familiar correspondence. Writing in 1849,

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while revising his volume for publication, he speaks of one of his poems as "that rascally old ballad 'Kathleen,'" and adds that it "wants something, though it is already too long." He adds: "The weather this morning is cold enough for an Esquimau purgatory—terrible. What did the old Pilgrims mean by coming here?"

With the years his friendship with his publisher became more intimate. In writing him he often indulged his humor for fun and banter: "Bachelor as I am, I congratulate thee on thy escape from single (misery!) blessedness. It is the very wisest thing thee ever did. Were I autocrat, I would see to it that every young man over twenty-five and every young woman over twenty was married without delay. Perhaps, on second thought, it might be well to keep one old maid and one old bachelor in each town, by way of warning, just as the Spartans did their drunken helots."

Discussing the question of some of his

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"bad rhymes," and what to do about them, he wrote once: "I heartily thank thee for thy suggestions. Let me have more of them. I had a hearty laugh at thy hint of the 'carnal' bearing of one of my lines. It is now simply *rural*. I might have made some other needful changes had I not been suffering with headache all day."

Occasionally the fire which burned in him would flame out, as when he writes in 1851: "So your Union-tinkers have really caught a 'nigger' at last! A very pretty and refreshing sight it must have been to Sabbath-going Christians yesterday—that *chained* court-house of yours. And Bunker Hill Monument looking down upon all! But the matter is too sad for irony. God forgive the miserable politicians who gamble for office with dice loaded with human hearts!"

From time to time, also, we find him expressing his literary opinions, eagerly and simply as friend may talk with friend,

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and without aspiring to literary judgment. "Thoreau's 'Walden' is capital reading, but very wicked and heathenish. The practical moral of it seems to be that if a man is willing to sink himself into a woodchuck he can live as cheaply as that quadruped; but, after all, for me, I prefer walking on two legs."

It would be unjust to Whittier to quote this talk on paper as his final opinion upon Thoreau, for he afterwards read everything he wrote, and was a warm appreciator of his work.

His enthusiasm for books and for the writers of books never faded. "What do we not all owe you," he writes Mr. Fields, "for your edition of De Tocqueville! It is one of the best books of the century. Thanks, too, for Allingham's poems. After Tennyson, he is my favorite among modern British poets."

And again: "I have just read Longfellow's introduction to his 'Tales of the Inn'—a splendid piece of painting!

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Neither Boccaccio nor Chaucer has done better. Who wrote 'A Loyal Woman's No?' Was it Lucy Larcom? I thought it might be."

In 1866 he says: "I am glad to see 'Hosea Biglow' in book form. It is a grand book—the best of its kind for the last half-century or more. It has wit enough to make the reputation of a dozen English satirists."

This appreciation of his contemporaries was a strong feature of his character. His sympathy with the difficulties of a literary life, particularly for women, was very keen. There seem to be few women writers of his time who have failed to receive from his pen some token of recognition. Of Edith Thomas he once said in one of his notelets, "She has a divine gift, and her first book is more than a promise—an assurance." Of Sarah Orne Jewett he was fond as of a daughter, and from their earliest acquaintance his letters are filled with ap-

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preciation of her stories. "*I do* not wonder," he wrote one day, "*that* 'The Luck of the Bogans' is attractive to the Irish folks, and to everybody else. It is a very successful departure from New England life and scenery, and shows that Sarah is as much at home in Ireland and on the Carolina Sea Islands as in Maine or Massachusetts. I am very proud that I was one of the first to discover her." This predisposition to think well of the work of others gave him the happy opportunity in more than one instance of bringing authors of real talent before the public who might otherwise have waited long for general recognition.

This was especially the case with one of our best beloved New England writers, Lucy Larcom. As early as 1853 he wrote a letter to his publisher introducing her work to his notice. "I enclose," he says, "what I regard as a very unique and beautiful little book in MS. I don't wish thee to take my opinion, but

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the first leisure hour thee have, read it, and I am sure thee will decide that it is exactly the thing for publication.... The little prose poems are unlike anything in our literature, and remind me of the German writer Lessing. They are equally adapted to young and old.... The author, Lucy Larcom, of Beverly, is a novice in writing and book-making, and with no ambition to appear in print, and were I not perfectly certain that her little collection is worthy of type, I would be the last to encourage her to take even this small step to publicity. Read 'The Impression of Rain-drops,' 'The Steamboat and Niagara,' 'The Laughing Water,' 'My Father's House,' etc."

He thus early became the foster-father of Lucy Larcom's children of the brain, and, what was far more to her, a life-long friend, adviser, and supporter.

One of his most intimate personal friends for many years was Lydia Maria Child. Beginning in the earliest days of

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the antislavery struggle, their friendship lasted into the late and peaceful sunset of their days. As Mrs. Child advanced in years, it was her custom in the winter to leave her cottage at Wayland for a few months and to take lodgings in Boston. The dignity and independence of Mrs. Child's character were so great that she knew her friends would find her wherever she might live, and her desire to help on the good work of the world led her to practise the most austere economies. Therefore, instead of finding a comfortable boarding-place, which she might well have excused herself for doing at her advanced age of eighty years, she took rooms in a very plain little house in a remote quarter of the city, and went by the street-cars daily to the north end, to get her dinner at a restaurant which she had discovered as being clean, and having wholesome food at the very lowest prices. This enabled her to give away sums which were surprisingly large to

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those who knew her income. Wendell Phillips, who had always taken charge of her affairs, said to me at the time of her death that when the negroes made their flight into Kansas, Mrs. Child came in as soon as the news arrived and asked him to forward fifty dollars for their assistance.

"I am afraid you cannot afford to send that sum just now," said Mr. Phillips. "Perhaps you will do well to think it over."

"So I will," said Mrs. Child, and departed.

In the course of the day he received a note from her, saying she had made a mistake. It was one hundred dollars that she wished to send.

Mrs. Child's chief pleasure in coming to town was the opportunity she found of seeing her friends. Whittier always sought her out, and their meetings at the houses of their mutual cronies were festivals indeed. They would sit side by side,

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while memories crowded up and filled their faces with a tenderness they could not express in words. As they told their tales and made merry, they would sit with their hands on each other's knees, and with glances in which tears and laughter were closely intermingled.

"It was good to see Mrs. Child," some one remarked, after one of those interviews.

"Yes," said Whittier, "Lyddy's bunnets aren't always in the fashion" (with a quaint look, as much as to say, "I wonder what you think of anything so bad"), "but we don't like her any the worse for that."

Shortly after Mrs. Child's death he wrote from Amesbury: "My heart has been heavy ever since I heard of dear Maria Child's death. The true, noble, loving soul! *Where* is she? *What* is she? *How* is she? The moral and spiritual economy of God will not suffer such light and love to be lost in blank

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annihilation. She was herself an evidence of immortality. In a letter written to me at seventy years of age she said: 'The older I grow the more I am awe-struck (not frightened, but awed) by the great mystery of an existence here and hereafter. No thinking can solve the problem. Infinite wisdom has purposely sealed it from our eyes.'"

There was never a moment of Whittier's life when, prostrated by illness, or overwhelmed by private sorrows, or removed from the haunts of men, he forgot to take a living interest in public affairs, and to study closely the characteristics and works of the men who were our governors. He understood the characters of our public officers as if he had lived with them continually, and his quick apprehension with regard to their movements was something most unusual. De Quincey, we remember, surprised his American friends by taking their hands, as it were, and showing them about Boston, so fa-

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miliar was he with our localities. Whittier could sit down with politicians, and easily prove himself the better man on contested questions. In 1861 he wrote:

"Our government needs more wisdom than it has thus far had credit for to sustain the national honor and avert a war with England. What a pity that Welles *indorsed* the act of Wilkes in his report! Why couldn't we have been satisfied with the thing without making such a cackling over it? Apologies are cheap, and we could afford to make a very handsome one in this case. A war with England would ruin us. It is too monstrous to think of. May God in His mercy save us from it!"

In 1862 and '63 Whittier was in frequent correspondence with Mr. Fields. Poems suggested by the stirring times were crowding thick upon his mind. "It is a great thing to live in these days. I am thankful for what I have lived to see and hear," he says. "There is noth-

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ing for us but the old Methodist ejaculation, 'Glory to God!'"

The volume entitled "In War-time" appeared at this period, though, as usual, he seems to have had little strength and spirit for the revision of his poems. For this, however unwillingly, he would often throw himself upon the kindness of his friend and publisher.

In writing to ask some consideration for the manuscript of an unknown lady during this year, he adds: "I ought to have sent to you about this lady's MS. long ago, but the fact is, I hate to bother you with such matters. I am more and more impressed with the Christian tolerance and patience of publishers, beset as you are with legions of clamorous authors, male and female. I should think you would hate the very sight of one of these importunates. After all, Fields, let us own the truth: writing folks are bores. How few of us (let them say what they will of our genius) have any common-sense! I take

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it that it is the Providential business of authors and publishers to torment each other."

These little friendly touches in his correspondence show us the man far more distinctly than many pages of writing about him. Some one has said that Whittier's epistolary style was perfect. Doubtless he could write as good a letter on occasion as any man who ever lived, but he sustained no such correspondence. His notes and letters were homely and affectionate, with the delightful carelessness possible in the talk of intimate friends. They present no ordinary picture of human tenderness, devotion, and charity, and these qualities gain a wonderful beauty when we remember that they come from the same spirit which cried out with Ezekiel:

"The burden of a prophet's power
Fell on me in that fearful hour;
From off unutterable woes
The curtain of the future rose;

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I saw far down the coming time
The fiery chastisement of crime;
With noise of mingling hosts, and jar
Of falling towers and shouts of war,
I saw the nations rise and fall
Like fire-gleams on my tent's white wall."

"The fire and fury of the brain" were his indeed; a spirit was in him to redeem the land; he was one of God's interpreters; but there was also the tenderness of divine humanity, the love and patience of those who dwell in the courts of the Lord.

Whittier's sister Elizabeth was a sensitive woman, whose delicate health was a constant source of anxiety to her brother, especially after the death of their mother, when they were left alone together in the home at Amesbury. As one of their intimate friends said, no one could tell which would die first, but they were each so anxious about the other's health that it was a question which would wear away into the grave first, for the other's sake.

It was Whittier's sad experience to

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be deprived of the companionship of all those most dear to him, and for over twenty years to live without that intimate household communion for the loss of which the world holds no recompense. For several years, before and after his sister Elizabeth's death, Whittier wore the look of one who was very ill. His large dark eyes burned with peculiar fire, and contrasted with his pale brow and attenuated figure. He had a sorrowful, stricken look, and found it hard enough to reconstruct his life, missing the companionship and care of his sister, and her great sympathy with his own literary work. There was a likeness between the two; the same speaking eyes marked the line from which they sprang, and their kinship and inheritance. Old New England people were quick to recognize "the Batchelder eyes," not only in the Whittiers, but in Daniel Webster, Caleb Cushing, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and William Batchelder Greene, a man less widely known than these dis-

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tinguished compatriots. Mr. Greene was, however, a man of mark in his own time, a daring thinker, and one who was possessed of much brave originality, whose own deep thoughtfulness was always planting seeds of thought in others, and who can certainly never be forgotten by those who were fortunate enough to be his friends.

These men of the grand eyes were all descended from a gifted old preacher of great fame in early colonial days, a man of true distinction and devoted service, in spite of the dishonor with which he let his name be shadowed in his latest years. It would be most interesting to trace the line still further back into the past, but when the Batchelder eyes were by any chance referred to in Whittier's presence, he would look shyly askance, and sometimes speak, half with pride, half with a sort of humorous compassion, of his Hampton ancestor. The connection of the Whittiers of Haverhill with the Greenes

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was somewhat closer than *with* other branches of the Batchelder *line*. One of the poet's most entertaining reminiscences of his boyhood was the story of his first visit to Boston. Mr. William Greene's mother was an interesting woman of strong, independent character and wide interests, wonted to the life of cities, and one of the first, in spite of his boyish shyness, to appreciate her young relative. Her kind eagerness, during one of her occasional visits to the Whittiers, that Greenleaf should come to see her when he came to Boston, fell in with his own dreams, and a high desire to see the sights of the great town.

One can easily imagine how his imagination must have glorified the natural expectations of a country boy, and when the time arrived, how the whole household lent itself to furthering so great an expedition. He was not only to have a new suit of clothes, but they were, for the first time, to be trimmed with "boughten

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buttons," to the lad's complete satisfaction, his mind being fixed upon those as marking the difference between town and country fashions. When the preparations were made, his fresh homespun costume, cut after the best usage of the Society of Friends, seemed to him all that heart could desire, and he started away bravely by the coach to pass a week in Boston. His mother had not forgotten to warn him of possible dangers and snares; it was then that he made her a promise which, at first from principle and later from sentiment, he always most sacredly kept—that he would not enter a playhouse. As he told the story, it was easy for a listener to comprehend how many good wishes flew after the adventurer, and how much wild beating of the heart he himself experienced as the coach rolled away; how bewildering the city streets appeared when he found himself at the brief journey's end. After he had reported himself to Mrs. Greene, and been

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received with most affectionate hospitality, and had promised to reappear at tea-time, he sallied forth to the great business of sight-seeing.

"I wandered up and down the streets," he used to say. "Somehow it wasn't just what I expected, and the crowd was worse and worse after I got into Washington Street; and when I got tired of being jostled, it seemed to me as if the folks might get by if I waited a little while. Some of them looked at me, and so I stepped into an alleyway and waited and looked out. Sometimes there didn't seem to be so many passing, and I thought of starting, and then they'd begin again. 'Twas a terrible stream of people to me. I began to think my new clothes and the buttons were all thrown away. I stayed there a good while." (This was said with great amusement.) "I began to be homesick. I thought it made no difference at all about my having those boughten buttons."

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How long he waited, or what great thoughts may have come from this first glimpse at the ceaseless procession of humanity, who can say? But there was a sequel to the tale. He was invited to return to Mrs. Greene's to drink tea and meet a company of her guests. Among them were some ladies who were very gay and friendly; we can imagine that they were attracted by the handsome eyes and quaint garb of the young Friend, and by his quick wit and homely turns of speech, all the more amusing for a rustic flavor. They tried to tease him a little, but they must have quickly found their match in drollery, while the lad was already a citizen of the commonwealth of books. No doubt the stimulus of such a social occasion brought him, as well as the strangers, into new acquaintance with his growing gifts. But presently one of the ladies, evidently the favorite until this shocking moment, began to speak of the theatre, and asked for the pleasure of

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his presence at the play that very night, she herself being the leading player. At this disclosure, and the frank talk of the rest of the company, their evident interest in the stage, and regard for a young person who had chosen such a profession, the young Quaker lad was stricken with horror. In after-years he could only remember it with amusement, but that night his mother's anxious warnings rang in his ears, and he hastened to escape from such a snare. Somehow this pleasant young companion of the tea-party hardly represented the wickedness of playhouses as Puritan New England loved to picture them; but between a sense of disappointment and homesickness and general insecurity, he could not sleep, and next morning when the early stage-coach started forth, it carried him as passenger. He said nothing to his amazed family of the alarming episode of the playing-woman, nor of his deep consciousness of the home-made clothes, but he no doubt reflected

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much upon this Boston visit in the leisure of the silent fields and hills.

It is impossible to convey to those who never saw Mr. Whittier, the charm of his gift of story-telling; the exactness and simplicity of his reminiscences were flavored by his poetical insight and dramatic representation. It was a wonderful thing to hear him rehearse in the twilight the scenes of his youth, and the figures that came and went in that small world; the pathos and humor of his speech can never be exceeded; and there can never be again so complete a linking of the ancient provincial lore and the new life and thought of New England as there was in him. While he was with us, his poems seemed hardly to give sufficient witness of that rich store of thought and knowledge; he was always making his horizon wider, at the same time that he came into closer sympathy with things near at hand. For him the ancient customs of a country neighborhood, the simple characters, the loves

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and hates and losses of a rural household, stood for a type of human life in every age, and were never trivial or narrow. As he grew older, these became less and less personal. He sometimes appeared to think of death rather than the person who had died, and of love and grief rather than of those who felt their influence. His was the life of the poet first of all, and yet the tale of his sympathetic friendliness, and his generosities and care-taking for others, will never be fully told. The dark eyes had great powers of insight; they could flash scorn as well as shine with the soft light of encouragement.

He accustomed himself, of course, to more frequent visits to Boston after his sister's death, but he was seldom, if ever, persuaded to go to the Saturday Club, to which so many of his friends belonged. Sometimes he would bring a new poem for a private first reading, and for that purpose would stay to breakfast or lunch-

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eon; but late dinners were contrary to the habit of his life, and he seldom sat down to one.

"I take the liberty," he wrote one day, "of enclosing a little poem of mine which has beguiled some weary hours. I hope thee will like it. How strange it seems not to read it to my sister! If thee have read Schoolcraft, thee will remember what he says of the 'Little Vanishers.' The legend is very beautiful, and I hope I have done it justice in some sort."

In the spring of 1865 he came to Campton, on the Pemigewasset River, in New Hampshire, a delightful place for those who love green hills and the mystery of rivers.

We were passing a few weeks there by ourselves, and it was a great surprise and pleasure to see our friend. He drove up to the door one afternoon just as the sun was slanting to the west, too late to drive away again that day. In our desire to show him all the glories of the spot, we

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carried him out at once, up the hill-side, leaping across the brook, gathering penny-royal and Indian posy as we went, past the sheep and on and up, until he, laughing, said: "Look here, I can't follow thee; besides, I think I've seen more of this life than thee have, and it isn't all so new to me! Come and sit down here; I'm tired." We sat a while overlooking the wonderful panorama, the winding river, the hills and fields all green and radiant, listening at times to a mountain stream which came with wild and solitary roar from its solemn home among the farther heights. Presently we returned to supper; and afterwards, sitting in the little parlor which looked towards the sunset on the high hills far away, his mind seemed to rise also into a higher atmosphere. He began by quoting the last verse of Emerson's "Sphinx:"

"Uprose the merry Sphinx,
And couched no more in stone;
She melted into purple cloud,
She silvered in the moon;

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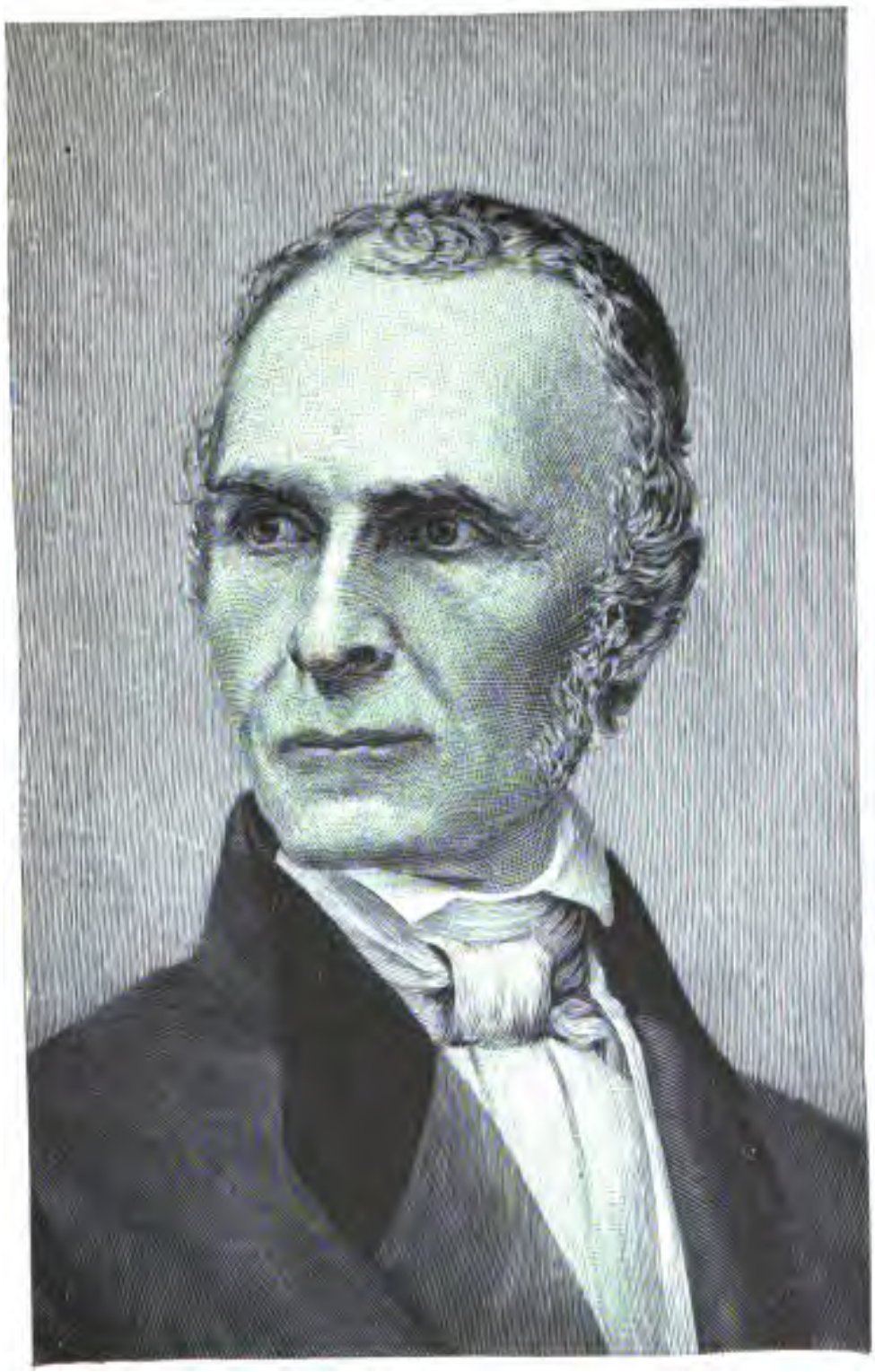

JOHN G. WHITTIER
At forty-five years of age

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She spired into a yellow flame;
She flowered in blossoms red;
She flowed into a foaming wave;
She stood Monadnock's head."

He talked long and earnestly upon the subject of our spiritual existence independent of the body. I have often heard him dwell upon this subject since; but the awful glory of the hills, the dark and silence of our little parlor, the assured speech touching the unseen, of one who had thought much and suffered much, and found a refuge in the tabernacle not made with hands, were very impressive. We felt that "it was good for us to be there."

Speaking of his faith in the visions of others—though he did not have these visions himself, and believed they were not vouchsafed to all—he told us of a prophecy that was written down twenty-five years before by an old man in Sandwich (a village among the hills, about fifteen miles from Campton), predicting

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the terrible civil war which had just been raging between the North and the South. This man was in the fields at noonday, when a darkness fell upon his sight and covered the earth. He beheld the divided nation and the freed people and the final deliverance from the terrors of war. The whole series of events were clearly detailed, and Whittier had stored them away in his memory. He said that only one thing was wrong. He foretold foreign intervention, from which we were happily spared. The daughter of this prophet was living; he knew her well—an excellent woman and a Friend who was often impressed to speak in meeting. "She is good," said Whittier, "and speaks from her experience, and for that reason I like to hear her."

Spiritualism, as it is called in our day, was a subject which earnestly and steadily held his attention. Having lived very near to the Salem witchcraft experience in early times, the topic was one that

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came more closely home to his mind than to almost any one else in our century. There are many passages in his letters on this question which state his own mental position very clearly.

"I have had as good a chance to see a ghost," he once said, "as anybody ever had, but not the slightest sign ever came to me. I do not doubt what others tell me, but I sometimes wonder over my own incapacity. I should like to see some dear ghost walk in and sit down by me when I am here alone. The doings of the old witch days have never been explained, and, as we are so soon to be transferred to another state, how natural it appears that some of us should have glimpses of it here! We all feel the help we receive from the Divine Spirit. Why deny, then, that some men have it more directly and more visibly than others?"

In his memories of New England country life when he was a child this subject

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was closely interwoven with every association. He had an uncle, who made one of the family, a man by no means devoid of the old-fashioned faith in witches, and who was always ready to give his testimony. He remembered an old woman in the neighborhood who was accused of being a witch, and that when his uncle's opinion was asked about her, he replied that he *knew she was a witch.*

"How do you know?" they said.

"Oh," he replied, "I've seen her!"

Whittier recalled this uncle's returning one night from a long drive through the woods; and when he came in and sat down by the fire after supper, he told them that he had seen three old women in a clearing around a kettle, "a-stirrin' of it." When they saw him, they moved off behind the trees, but he distinctly saw the smoke from the kettle, and he recognized the old woman in question as one of the three beyond the shadow of a doubt. No doubt some curious rustic

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remedy or charm was being brewed in the dark of the moon. Nothing escaped his observation that was printed or circulated upon this topic. In the summer of 1882 he discovered that Old Orchard Beach had been made a theatre of new wonders. Dr. ——— had been there, "working Protestant miracles, and the lame walk and the deaf hear under his manipulation and holy oil. There seems no doubt that cures of nervous diseases are really sometimes effected, and I believe in the efficacy of prayer. The nearer we are drawn to Him who is the source of all life, the better it must be for soul and body."

In Robert Dale Owen he always took a strong and friendly interest; and when, late in life, reverses fell upon him in the shape of humiliating revelations of his own credulity, Whittier's relations to him were unchanged. "I have read with renewed interest," he wrote, "the paper of R. D. Owen. I had a long talk with him

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years ago on the subject. He was a very noble and good man, and I was terribly indignant when he was so deceived by the pretended materialized 'Katie King.' I could never quite believe in 'materialization,' as I had reason to know that much of it was fraudulent. It surely argues a fathomless depth of depravity to trifle with the yearning love of those who have lost dear ones, and 'long for the touch of a vanished hand.'"

In the year 1866 a very fine portrait of Abraham Lincoln was engraved by Marshall. A copy of it was presented to Whittier, who wrote concerning it: "It was never my privilege to know Abraham Lincoln personally, and the various pictures have more or less failed to satisfy my conception of him. They might be, and probably were, what are called 'good likenesses,' so far as outline and detail were concerned; but to me they always seemed to lack one great essential of a true por-

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trait—the informing spirit of the man within. This I find in Marshall's portrait. The old harsh lines and unmistakable mouth are there, without flattery or compromise; but over all and through all the pathetic sadness, the wise simplicity and tender humanity of the man are visible. It is the face of the speaker at Gettysburg, and the writer of the second inaugural."

It was during this year, also, that the "Tent on the Beach" was written. He had said again and again in his notes that he had this work in hand, but always declared he was far too ill to finish it during the year. Nevertheless, in the last days of December the package was forwarded to his publisher. "Tell me," he wrote, "if thee object to the personal character of it. I have represented thee and Bayard Taylor and myself living a wild tent life for a few summer days on the beach, where, for lack of something better, I read my stories to the others.

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My original plan was the old 'Decameron' one, each personage to read his own poems; but the thing has been so hackneyed by repetition that I abandoned it in disgust, and began anew. The result is before thee. Put it in type or the fire. I am content—like Eugene Aram, 'prepared for either fortune.'"

He had intended also to accomplish some work in prose at this period, but the painful condition of his health forbade it. "I am forbidden to use my poor head," he said, "so I have to get along as I can without it. The Catholic St. Leon, thee knows, walked alert as usual after his head was cut off."

I am tempted to quote still further from a letter of this period: "I enclose a poem of mine which has never seen the light, although it was partly in print from my first draft to spare me the trouble of copying. It presents my view of Christ as the special manifestation of the love of God to humanity. . . . Let me thank the

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publisher of Milton's prose for the compliment of the dedication. Milton's prose has long been my favorite reading. My whole life has felt the influence of his writings."

There is a delightful note on the subject of the popularity of the "Tent on the Beach," which shows his natural pleasure in success. "Think," he says, "of bagging in this tent of ours an unsuspecting public at the rate of a thousand a day! This will never do. The swindle is awful. Barnum is a saint to us. I am bowed with a sense of guilt, ashamed to look an honest man in the face. But Nemesis is on our track; somebody will puncture our tent yet, and it will collapse like a torn balloon. I know I shall have to catch it; my back tingles in anticipation."

It was perhaps in this same year, 1866, that we made an autumn visit to Whittier, which is still a well-remembered pleasure. The weather was warm and

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the fruit was ripening in the little Amesbury garden. We loitered about for a while, I remember, in the afternoon, among the falling pear leaves and in the sweet air, but he soon led the way into his garden-room, and fell into talk. He was an adept in the art of conversation, having trained himself in the difficult school of a New England farm-house, fit ground for such athletics, being typically bare of suggestion and of relief from outside resources. The unbroken afternoons and the long evenings, when the only hope of entertainment is in such fire as one brain can strike from another, produce a situation as difficult to the unskilled as that of an untaught swimmer when first cast into the sea. Persons long habituated to these contests could face the position calmly, and see the early "tea-things" disappear and the contestants draw their chairs around the fire with a kind of zeal; but to one new to such experience there was room for heart-

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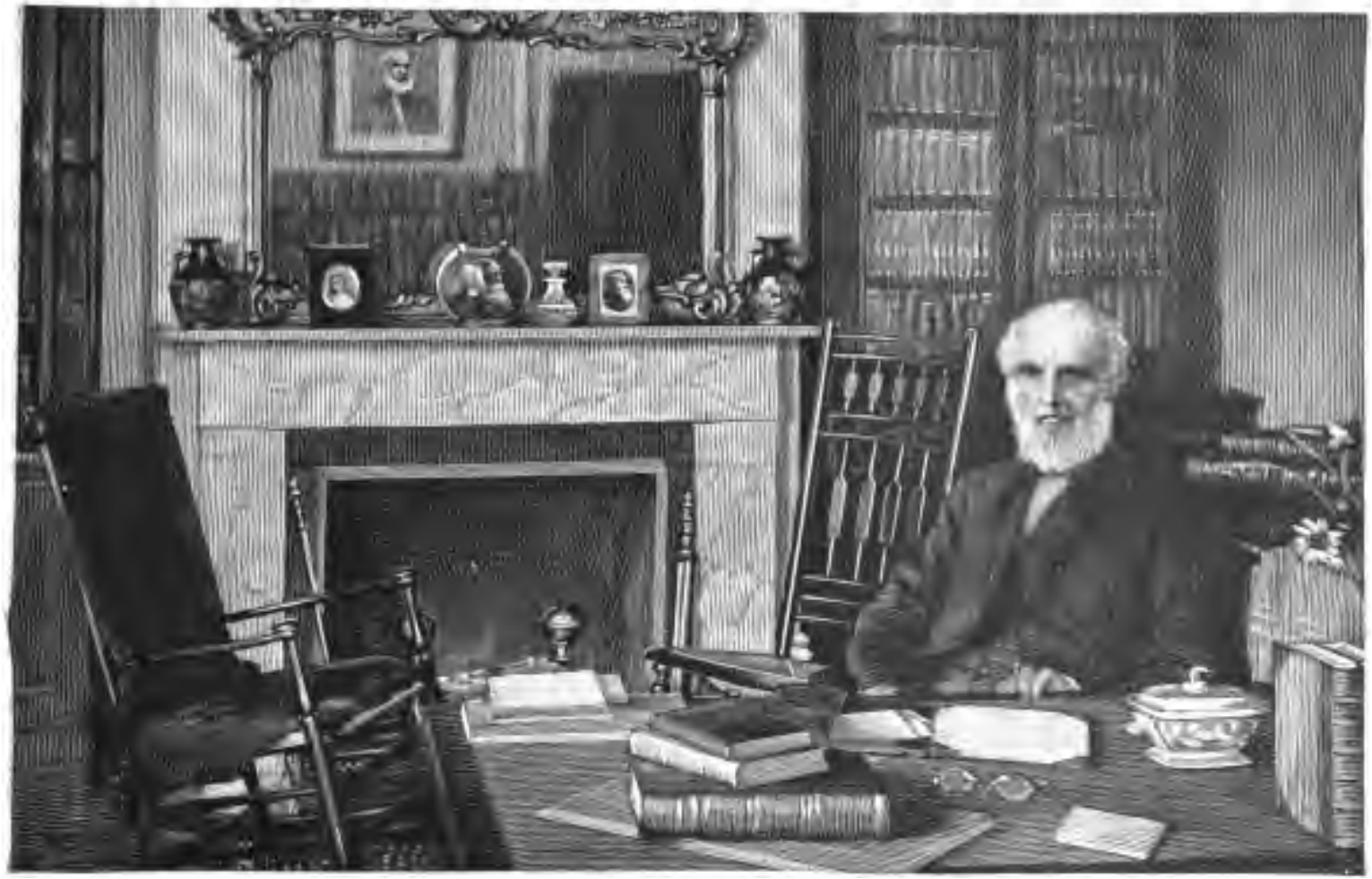

WHITTIER IN HIS STUDY

After a photograph by J. H. Thurston, Boston

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sinkings when preparations were made, by putting fresh sticks on the fire, for sitting from gloaming to vespers, and sometimes on again unwearied till midnight.

Mrs. Stowe and Whittier were the invincible Lancelots of these tourneys, and any one who has had the privilege of sitting by the New England hearth-stone with either of them will be ready to confess that no playhouse, or game, or any of the distractions the city may afford, can compare with the satisfaction of such an experience. Upon the visit in question Whittier talked of the days of his antislavery life in 1835 or '36, when the English agitator, George Thompson, first came to this country. The latter was suffering from the attack of many a mob, and was fatigued by frequent speaking and as frequent abuse. Whittier invited him to his home in the neighborhood of Haverhill, where he could find quiet and rest during the warm weather. Thompson accepted the invitation, and remained

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with him a fortnight. They used to rake hay together, and go about the farm unmolested. At length, however, a pressing invitation came for Thompson to go to Concord, New Hampshire, to speak in the cause of freedom, and afterwards to continue on to the village of Plymouth and visit a friend in that place. Whittier was included in the invitation, and it was settled that they should accept the call. They travelled peaceably enough, in their own chaise, as far as Concord, where the speech was delivered without interruption; but when they attempted to leave the hall after the address was ended, they found it almost impossible. A crowd followed them with the apparent intention of stoning and killing them. "I understood how St. Paul felt when he was thrice stoned," said Whittier. The missiles fell around them and upon them like hail, not touching their heads, providentially, although he could still remember the sound of the stones when they

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missed their aim and struck the wooden fence behind them. They were made very lame by the blows, but they managed to reach their friend's house, where they sprang up the steps three at a time, before the crowd knew where they were going. Their host was certainly a brave man, for he met them at the door, and throwing it open, exclaimed, "Whoever comes in here must come over my dead body." The door was then barricaded, and the crowd rushed round to the back of the house, thinking that their victims intended to go out that way; but the travellers waited until it was dark, when Whittier exchanged his friend's hat for that of his host, and anything else peculiar about his dress being well disguised, the two managed to pass out unperceived by the crowd, and go on their way to Plymouth. They stopped one night on their journey at a small inn, where the landlord asked if they had heard anything of the riot in Concord. Two men had been there, he

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said, one an Englishman by *the* name of Thompson, who had been *making* abominable and seditious speeches, stirring up people about "the niggers;" the other was a young Quaker by the name of Whittier, who was always making speeches. He heard him lecture once himself, he said (a base lie, Whittier told us, because he had never "lectured" in his life), and it was well that active measures had been taken against them. "We heard him all through," said Whittier, "and then, just as I had my foot on the step of the chaise, ready to drive away from the door, I remarked to him, 'Wouldn't you like to see that Thompson of whom you have been speaking?' I took good care not to use 'plain' language (that is, the Quaker form). 'I rather think I should,' said the man. 'Well, this is Mr. Thompson,' I said, as I jumped into the chaise. 'And this is the Quaker, Whittier,' said Thompson, driving away as fast as he could. I

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looked back, and saw him standing, mouth wide open, gazing after us in the greatest astonishment."

The two kept on to Plymouth, where they were nearly mobbed a second time. Years after, Whittier said that once when he was passing through Portland, a man, seeing him go by, stepped out of his shop and asked if his name were Whittier, and if he were not the man who was stoned, years before, by a mob at Concord. The answer being in the affirmative, he said he believed a devil possessed him that night; for he had no reason to wish evil either to Whittier or Thompson, yet he was filled with a desire to kill them, and he thought he should have done so if they had not escaped. He added that the mob was like a crowd of demons, and he knew one man who had mixed a black dye to dip them in, which would be almost impossible to get off. He could not explain to himself or to another the state of mind he was in.

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The next morning we walked with Whittier again in his little garden, and saw his grapes, which were a source of pride and pleasure. One vine, he told us, came up from a tiny rootlet sent to him by Charles Sumner, in a letter from Washington.

Later we strolled forth into the village street as far as the Friends' meeting-house, and sat down upon the steps while he told us something of his neighbors. He himself, he said, had planted the trees about the church: they were then good-sized trees. He spoke very earnestly about the worship of the Friends. All the associations of his youth and all the canons of his education and development were grounded on the Friends' faith and doctrine, and he was anxious that they should show a growth commensurate with the age. He disliked many of the innovations, but his affectionate spirit clung to his people, and he longed to see them drawing to themselves a larger measure

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of spiritual life, day by day. He loved the old custom of sitting in silence, and hoped they would not stray away into habits of much speaking. The old habits of the meeting-house were very dear to him.

One cold, clear morning in January I heard his early ring. He had been ill, but was so much better that he was absolutely gay. He insisted upon blowing the fire, which, as sometimes happens, will struggle to do its worst on the coldest days; and as the flames at last began to roar, his spirits rose with them. He was rejoicing over Garibaldi's victory. The sufferings of Italy had been so terrible that even one small victory in their behalf seemed a great gain. He said that he had been trying to arouse the interest of the Friends, but it usually took about two years to thoroughly awaken them on any great topic!

He remained several hours that morn-

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ing talking over his hopes *for the* country — of politics, of Charles Sumner, of whom he said, "Sumner is always fundamentally right;" and of John Bright, for whose great gifts he had sincere admiration. Soon afterwards, at the time of this great man's death, Whittier wrote to us: "Spring is here to-day, warm, birdfull. . . . It seems strange that I am alive to welcome her when so many have passed away with the winter, and among them that stalwartest of Englishmen, John Bright, sleeping now in the daisied grounds of Rochdale, never more to move the world with his surpassing eloquence. How I regret that I have never seen him! We had much in common in our religious faith, our hatred of war and oppression. His great genius seemed to me to be always held firmly in hand by a sense of duty, and by the practical common-sense of a shrewd man of business. He fought through life like an old knight-errant, but without enthusiasm. He had no per-

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sonal ideals. I remember once how he remonstrated with me for my admiration for General Gordon. He looked upon that wonderful personality as a wild fighter, a rash adventurer, doing evil that good might come. He could not see him as I saw him, giving his life for humanity, alone and unfriended, in that dreadful Soudan. He did not like the idea of fighting Satan with Satan's weapons. Lord Salisbury said truly that John Bright was the greatest orator England had produced, and his eloquence was only called out by what he regarded as the voice of God in his soul."

When at length Whittier rose to go that winter morning, with the feeling that he had already taken too large a piece out of the day, we pressed him to stay longer, since it was already late. "Why can't you stay?" urged his host. "Because, I tell you, I don't want to," which set us all laughing, and settled the question.

Our first knowledge of his arrival in

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town was usually that early and punctual ring to which I have referred. He would come in looking pale and thin, but full of fire, and, as we would soon find, of a certain vigor. He became interested one morning in a plan proposed to him for making a collection of poems for young people, one which he finally completed with the aid of Miss Lucy Larcom. We got down from the shelf Longfellow's "Poets and Poetry of Europe," and looked it over together. "Annie of Tharaw" was a great favorite of his, and the poem by Dirk Smit, on "The Death of an Infant," found his ready appreciation. Whittier easily fell from these into talk of Burns, who was his master and ideal. "He lives, next to Shakespeare," he said, "in the heart of humanity."

In speaking of Rossetti and of his ballad of "Sister Helen," he confessed to being strangely attracted to this poem, because he could remember seeing his mother, "who was as good a woman as

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ever lived," and his aunt, performing the same strange act of melting a waxen figure of a clergyman of their time.

The solemnity of the affair made a deep impression on his mind, as a child, for the death of the clergyman in question was confidently expected. His "heresies" had led him to experience this cabalistic treatment.

There was some talk, also, that morning of the advantages, in these restless days, accruing to those who "stay put" in this world, instead of to those who are forever beating about, searching for greater opportunities from position or circumstance. He laughed heartily over the tale, which had just then reached us, of Carlyle going to hunt up a new residence in London with a map of the world in his pocket.

We asked Whittier if he never felt tempted to go to Quebec from his well-beloved haunts in the White Mountains. "Oh no," he replied. "I know it all by

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books and pictures just as *well as if* I had seen it."

This talk of travelling reminded him of a circus which came one season to Amesbury. "I was in my garden," he said, "when I saw an Arab wander down the street, and by-and-by stop and lean against my gate. He held a small book in his hand, which he was reading from time to time when he was not occupied with gazing about him. Presently I went to talk with him, and found he had lived all his life on the edge of the Desert until he had started for America. He was very homesick, and longed for the time of his return. He had hired himself for a term of years to the master of the circus. He held the Koran in his hand, and was delighted to find a friend who had also read his sacred book. He opened his heart still further then, and said how he longed for his old, wild life in the Desert, for a sight of the palms, and the sands, but, above all, for its free-

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dom." This interview made a deep impression, naturally, upon Whittier's mind, he, who was no traveller himself, having thus sung:

> "He who wanders widest, lifts
> No more of beauty's jealous veil
> Than he who from his doorway sees
> The miracle of flowers and trees."

The memory of a visit to Amesbury, made once in September, vividly remains with me. It was early in the month, when the lingering heat of summer seems sometimes to gather fresh intensity from the fact that we are so soon to hear the winds of autumn. Amesbury had greatly altered of late years; "large enough to be a city," our friend declared; "but I am not fat enough to be an alderman." To us it was still a small village, though somewhat dustier and less attractive than when we first knew it.

As we approached the house, we saw him from a distance characteristically

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gazing down the road for us, from his front yard, and then at the first glimpse suddenly disappearing, to come forth again to meet us, quite fresh and quiet, from his front door. It had been a very hot, dry summer, and everything about that place, as about every other, was parched and covered with dust. There had been no rain for weeks, and the village street was then quite innocent of watering-carts. The fruit hung heavily from the nearly leafless trees, and the soft thud of the pears and apples as they fell to the ground could be heard on every side in the quiet house-yards. The sun struggled feebly through the mists during the noontide hours, when a still heat pervaded rather than struck the earth; and then in the early afternoon, and late into the next morning, a stirless cloud seemed to cover the face of the world. These mists were much increased by the burning of peat and brush, and, alas! of the very woods themselves, in every direc-

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tion. Altogether, as Whittier said, quaintly, "it was very encouraging weather for the Millerites."

His niece, who bears the name of his beloved sister, was then the mistress of his home, and we were soon made heartily welcome inside the house, where everything was plain and neat as became a Friend's household; but as the village had grown to be a stirring place, and the house stood close upon the dusty road, such charming neatness must sometimes have been a difficult achievement. The noonday meal was soon served and soon ended, and then we sat down behind the half-closed blinds, looking out upon the garden, the faded vines, and almost leafléss trees. It was a cosey room, with its Franklin-stove, at this season surmounted by a bouquet, and a table between the windows, where was a larger bouquet, which Whittier himself had gathered that morning in anticipation of our arrival. He seemed brighter and better than we

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had dared to hope, and was in excellent mood for talking. Referring again to the Millerites, who had been so reanimated by the forest fires, he said he had been deeply impressed lately with their deplorable doctrines. "Continually disappointed because we don't all burn up on a sudden, they forget to be thankful for their preservation from the dire fate they predict with so much complacency."

He had just received a proof of his poem "Miriam," with the introduction, and he could not be content until they had both been read aloud to him. After the reading they were duly commented upon, and revised until he thought he could do no more; yet twice before our departure the proofs were taken out of the hand-bag where they were safely stowed away, and again more or less altered.

Whittier's ever-growing fame was not taken by him as a matter of course. "I cannot think very well of my own things," he used to say; "and what is mere fame

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worth when thee is at home, alone, and sick with headaches, unable either to read or to write?" Nevertheless, he derived very great pleasure and consolation from the letters and tributes which poured in upon him from hearts he had touched or lives he had quickened. "That I like," he would say sometimes; "that is worth having." But he must often have known the deeps of sadness in winter evenings when he was too ill to touch book or pen, and when he could do nothing during the long hours but sit and think over the fire.

We slept in Elizabeth's chamber. The portrait of their mother, framed in autumn leaves gathered in the last autumn of her life, hung upon the wall. Here, too, as in our bedroom at Dickens's, the diary of Pepys lay on the table. Dickens had read his copy faithfully, and written notes therein. Of this copy the leaves had not been cut; but with it lay the "Prayers of the Ages," and volumes of poems, which

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had all been well read, and "*Pickwick*" upon the top.

In the year 1867 Charles Dickens came to America to give his famous Readings. Whittier, as we have seen, was seldom tempted out of his country home and habitual ways, but Dickens was for one moment too much for him. To our surprise, he wrote to ask if he could possibly get a seat to hear him. "I see there is a crazy rush for tickets." A favorable answer was despatched to him as soon as practicable, but he had already repented of the indiscretion. "My dear Fields," he wrote, "up to the last moment I have hoped to occupy the seat so kindly promised me for this evening. But I find I must give it up. Gladden with it the heart of some poor wretch who dangled and shivered all in vain in your long *queue* the other morning. I must read my 'Pickwick' alone, as the Marchioness played cribbage. I should so like, never-

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theless, to see Dickens, and shake that creative hand of his! It is as well, doubtless, so far as he is concerned, that I cannot do it; he will have enough and too much of that, I fear. I dreamed last night I saw him surrounded by a mob of ladies, each with her scissors snipping at his hair, and he seemed in a fair way to be 'shaven and shorn,' like the Priest in 'The House that Jack Built.'"

The large events of humanity were to Whittier a portion of his own experience, his personal life being, in the ordinary sense, devoid of incident. The death of Charles Dickens, in 1871, was a personal loss, just as his life had been a living gain to this remote and invalid man. One long quiet summer afternoon shortly after, Whittier joined us for the sake of talking about Dickens. He told us what sunshine came from him into his own solemn and silent country life, and what grateful love he must ever bear to him. He wished to hear all that could be told of him as a

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man. Tea came, and the sun went down, and still he talked and questioned, and then, after a long silence, he said, suddenly: "What's he doing now? Sometimes I say, in Shakespeare's phrase, O for some 'courteous ghost,' but nothing ever comes to me. He was so human I should think thee must *see* him sometimes. It seems as if he were the very person to manifest himself and give us a glimpse beyond. I believe I have faith; I sometimes think I have; but this desire to see just a little way is terribly strong in me. I have expressed something of it in my verses to Mrs. Child about Loring."

He spoke also of the significance of our prayers; of their deep value to our spirit in constantly renewing the sense of dependence: and further, since we "surely find that our prayers are answered, what blindness and fatuity there is in neglect or abuse of our privilege!"

He was thinking of editing a new edition of John Woolman. He hoped to

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induce certain people who would read his own books, to read that, by writing a preface for it.

The death of Henry Ward Beecher was also a loss and a sadness to him in his solitary life. "I am saddened by the death of Beecher," he wrote; "he was so strong, so generous, so warm-hearted, and so brave and stalwart in so many good causes. It is a mighty loss. He had faults, like all of us, and needed forgiveness; and I think he could say, with David of old, that he would rather fall into the Lord's hands than into the hands of man."

It is anticipating the years and interrupting the narrative to mention here a few of the men who gladdened his later life by their friendship, but the subject demands a brief space before we return to the current story of his days.

Matthew Arnold went to see him upon his arrival in this country, and it is needless to say that Whittier derived sincere

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pleasure from the visit; but Arnold's delightful recognition of Whittier's "In School Days," as one of the perfect poems which must live, gave him fresh assurance of fulfilled purpose in existence. He had followed Arnold with appreciation from his earliest appearance in the world of letters, and knew him, as it were, "by heart" long before a personal interview was possible. In a letter written after Arnold's return to England, he says: "I share thy indignation at the way our people have spoken of him—one of the foremost men of our time, a true poet, a wise critic, and a brave, upright man, to whom all English-speaking people owe a debt of gratitude. I am sorry I could not see him again."

When the end came, a few years later, he was among the first to say, "What a loss English literature has sustained in the death of Matthew Arnold!"

As I have already suggested, he kept the run of all the noteworthy people who

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LAWN AT OAK KNOLL, DANVERS

After a photograph by J. H. Thurston, Boston

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came to Boston quite as surely as they kept in pursuit of him.

"I hope thee will see the wonderful prophet of the Bramo Somaj, Mozoomdar, before he leaves the country. I should have seen him in Boston but for illness last week. That movement in India is the greatest event in the history of Christianity since the days of Paul.

"So the author of 'Christie Johnstone' is dead. I have read and reread that charming little story with ever-increasing admiration. I am sorry for the coarseness of some of his later writings; but he was, after all, a great novelist, second only in our times to George Eliot, Dickens, and Thackeray. . . . I shall be glad to hear more about Mr. Wood's and Mrs. ——'s talks. Any hint or sign or token from the unseen and spiritual world is full of solemn interest, standing as I do on the shore of 'that vast ocean I must sail so soon.'. . .

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"You will soon have Amelia Edwards with you. I am sorry that I have not been able to call on her. Pray assure her of my sincere respect and admiration."

And again: "Have thee seen and heard the Hindoo Mohini? He seems to have really converted some people. I hear that one of them has got a Bible!"

The phrase that he is "beset by pilgrims" occurs frequently in his letters, contrasted with pleased expressions, and descriptions of visits from Phillips Brooks, Canon Farrar, Governor and Mrs. Claflin, and other friends whose faces were always a joy to him.

I have turned aside from the narrative of every-day life to mention these friends; but it is interesting to return and recall the earlier years, when he came one day to dine in Charles Street with Mr. Emerson. As usual, his coming had been very uncertain. He was never to be counted upon as a visitor, but at length the moment

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came when he was in better health than ordinary, and the stars were in conjunction. I can recall his saying to Emerson: "I had to choose between hearing thee at thy lecture and coming here to see thee. I chose to see thee. I could not do both." Emerson was heard to say to him, solicitously: "I hope you are pretty well, sir! I believe you formerly bragged of bad health."

It was Whittier's custom, however, to make quite sure that all "lions" and other disturbing elements were well out of the way before he turned his steps to the library in Charles Street. I recall his coming one Sunday morning when we were at church, and waiting until our return. He thought that would be a safe moment! He was full, as Madame de Sévigné says, "*de conversations infinies*," being especially interested just then in the question of schools for the freedmen, and eagerly discussed ways and means for starting and supporting them.

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We were much amused by his ingenuity in getting contributions from his home town. It appears that he had taken it into consideration that there were a number of carriage-makers in Amesbury. He suggested that each one of these men should give some part of a carriage—one the wheels, one the body, one the furnishings, etc., dividing it in all among twenty workmen. When it was put together, he had a carriage which was sold for two hundred dollars, which was exactly the sum requisite for Amesbury to give.

He had just parted from his niece, who had gone to teach the freed people in a small Southern village. He could not help feeling anxious for her welfare. She and her young coworkers would be the only Northerners in the place. Of course, such new-comers would be regarded with no friendly eye by the "mean whites," and their long distance from home and from any protection would make their position a very forlorn

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one indeed if the natives should turn against them. He was fearful lest they should be half starved. However, they had departed in excellent spirits, which went a long way to cheer everybody concerned.

He was also full of sympathy and anxiety regarding the well-being of a young colored girl here at the North, whose sad situation he had been called upon to relieve; and after discussing ways and laying plans for her comfort (which he afterwards adhered to, until in later years she was placed in a happy home of her own), he went on to discuss the needs of yet a third young person, another victim of the war, who was then teaching in Amesbury. He was almost as remarkable as Mrs. Child in his power of making his own small provision into a broad mantle to cover many shoulders. He was undaunted, too, in his efforts, where his own resources failed, to get what was needed by the help of others.

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His common-sense was so great, and his own habits so frugal, that no one could imagine a dollar wasted or misapplied that was confided to his stewardship. His benefactions were ceaseless, and they were one of the chief joys of his later life. The subject of what may be done for this or that person or cause is continually recurring in his letters. Once I find this plea in verse after the manner of Burns:

"O well-paid author, fat-fed scholar,
Whose pockets jingle with the dollar,
No sheriff's hand upon your collar,
No duns to bother,
Think on't, a tithe of what ye swallow
Would save your brother!"

And again and again there are passages in his letters like the following: "I hope the Industrial Home may be saved, and wish I was a rich man just long enough to help save it. As it is, if the subscription needs $30 to fill it up, I shall be glad to give the mite." "I have long followed Maurice," he says again, "in his work

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as a religious and social reformer—a true apostle of the gospel of humanity. He saw clearly, and in advance of his clerical brethren, the necessity of wise and righteous dealing with the momentous and appalling questions of labor and poverty."

He wrote one day: "If you go to Richmond, why don't you visit Hampton and Old Point Comfort, where that Christian knight and latter-day Galahad, General Armstrong, is making his holy experiment? I think it would be worth your while."

General Armstrong and his brave work in founding and maintaining the Hampton School for the education, at first, of the colored people alone, and finally for the Indians also, was one of the near and living interests of Whittier's life. Often and often in his letters do we find references to the subject; either he regrets having to miss seeing the General, upon one of his Northern trips, or he re-

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joices in falling in with some of the teachers at Asquam Lake or elsewhere, or his note is jubilant over some new gift which will make the General's work for the year less difficult.

Once he writes: "I am grieved to hear of General Armstrong's illness. I am not surprised at it. He has been working in his noble cause beyond any mortal man's strength. He must have a rest if it is possible for him, and his friends must now keep up the school by redoubled efforts. Ah me! There is so much to be done in this world! I wish I were younger or a millionaire."

And yet again: "I had the pleasure of sending General Armstrong at Christmas, with my annual subscription, one thousand dollars which a friend placed in my hand. I wish our friend could be relieved from the task of raising money by a hundred such donations."

The choice of the early breakfast hour for his visits was his own idea. He was

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THE HOUSE AT HAMPTON FALLS

Whittier on the balcony

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glad to hit upon a moment which was not subject to interruptions, one when he could talk at his ease of books and men. These visits were always a surprise. He liked to be abroad in good season, and had rarely missed seeing the sun rise in forty years. He knew, too, that we were not late people, and that his visits could never be untimely. Occasionally, with the various evening engagements of a city, we were not altogether fit to receive him, but it was a pleasure to hear his punctual ring, and to know that we should find him in the library by the fire. He was himself a bad sleeper, seldom, as he said, putting a solid bar of sleep between day and day, and therefore often early abroad to question the secrets of the dawn. We owe much of the intimate friendship of our life to these morning hours spent in private, uninterrupted talk.

"I have lately felt great sympathy with ——," he said one morning, "for I have been kept awake one hundred and twenty

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hours—an experience I should *not* care to try again."

One of Whittier's summer pleasures, in which he occasionally indulged himself, was a visit to the Isles of Shoals. He loved to see his friend Celia Thaxter in her island home, and he loved the freedom of a large hotel. He liked to make arrangements with a group of his more particular friends to meet him there; and when he was well enough to leave his room, he might be seen in some carefully chosen corner of the great piazzas, shady or sunny, as the day invited him, enjoying the keenest happiness in the voluntary society and conversation of those dear to him. Occasionally he would pass whole days in Celia Thaxter's parlor, watching her at her painting in the window, and listening to the conversation around him. He wished to hear and know what interested others. He liked nothing better, he once said, than going into the "store" in the

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old days at Amesbury, when it was a common centre, almost serving the purpose of what a club may be in these later days, and sitting upon a barrel to hear "folks talk." The men there did not know much about his poetry, but they understood his politics, and he was able to put in many a word to turn the vote of the town. In Celia Thaxter's parlor he found a different company, but his relations to the people who frequented that delightful place were practically the same. He wished to understand their point of view, if possible, and then, if he could find opportunity, he would help them to a higher standpoint.

I remember one season in particular, when the idle talk of idle people had been drifting in and out during the day, while he sat patiently on in the corner of the pretty room. Mrs. Thaxter was steadily at work at her table, yet always hospitable, losing sight of no cloud or shadow or sudden gleam of glory in the landscape,

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and pointing the talk often with keen wit. Nevertheless, the idleness of it all palled upon him. It was Sunday, too, and he longed for something which would move us to "higher levels." Suddenly, as if the idea had struck him like an inspiration, he rose, and taking a volume of Emerson from the little library, he opened to one of the discourses, and handing it to Celia Thaxter, said:

"Read that aloud, will thee? I think we should all like to hear it."

After she ended he took up the thread of the discourse, and talked long and earnestly upon the beauty and necessity of worship—a necessity consequent upon the nature of man, upon his own weakness, and his consciousness of the Divine Spirit within him. His whole heart was stirred, and he poured himself out towards us as if he longed, like the prophet of old, to breathe a new life into us. I could see that he reproached himself for not having spoken out in this way before, but his

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enfranchised spirit took only a stronger flight for the delay.

I have never heard of Whittier's speaking in the meeting-house, although he was doubtless often "moved" to do so, but to us who heard him on that day he became more than ever a light unto our feet. It was not an easy thing to do to stem the accustomed current of life in this way, and it is a deed only possible to those who, in the Bible phrase, "walk with God."

Such an unusual effort was not without its consequences. It was followed by a severe headache, and he was hardly seen abroad again during his stay.

We heard from him again, shortly after, under the shadow of the great hills where he always passed a part of every year. He loved them, and wrote eloquently of the loveliness of nature at Ossipee: "the Bear Camp winding down" the long green valley close by the door, the long Sandwich and Waterville

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ranges, and Chocorua filling up the horizon from west to north-east.

The frequent loneliness of his life often found expression. Once he says:

"I wish I could feel that I deserved a tithe even of the kind things said of me by my personal friends. If one could but *be* as easily as preach! The confession of poor Burns might, I fear, be made of the best of us:

> "'God knows I'm no the thing I would be,
> Nor am I even the thing I could be.'

And yet I am thankful every day of my life that God has put it into the hearts of so many whom I love and honor and reverence to send me so many messages of good-will and kindness. It is an unspeakable comfort in the lonely and darkening afternoon of life. Indeed, I can never feel quite alone so long as I know that all about me are those who turn to me with friendly interest, and, strange to say, with gratitude. A sense of lack of

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desert on my part is a drawback, of course; but then, I say to myself, if my friends judge me by my aim and desire, and not by my poor performance, it may be all right and just."

The painful solitude of his life after his dear niece's marriage was softened when he went to live with his cousins at Oak Knoll, in Danvers, a pleasant country-seat, sheltered and suited to his needs.

Of this place Mrs. Spofford says, in a delightful biographical paper: "The estate of Oak Knoll is one of some historical associations, as here once lived the Rev. George Burroughs, the only clergyman in the annals of Salem witchcraft who was hung for dark dealings, Danvers having originally been a part of the town of Salem, where witchcraft came to a blaze, and was stamped out of existence. . . . The only relic on the place of its tragedy is the well of the Burroughs' house, which is still in the hay-field, and over which is the resting-place of the

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sounding-board of the pulpit in the church where the witches were tried."

At Danvers he was able to enjoy the free open air. He loved to sit under the fine trees which distinguished the lawn, to play with the dogs, and wander about unmolested until he was tired. The ladies of the house exerted themselves to give him perfect freedom and the tenderest care. The daughter became his playmate, and she never quite grew up, in his estimation. She was his lively and loving companion. Writing from Danvers, one December, he says, "What with the child, and the dogs, and Rip Van Winkle, the cat, and a tame gray squirrel who hunts our pockets for nuts, we contrive to get through the short dark days."

Again: "I am thankful that February has come, and that the sun is getting high on his northern journey. The past month has been trying to flesh and spirit. . . . I am afraid my letter has a complaining tone, and I am rather ashamed

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of it, and shall be more so when my head is less out of order. . . . There are two gray squirrels playing in my room. Phœbe calls them Deacon Josiah and his wife Philury, after Rose Terry Cooke's story of the minister's 'week of works' in the place of a 'week of prayer.'"

He showed more physical vitality after he went to Danvers, and his notes evince a wide interest in matters private and public outside his own library life. He still went to Portland to see his niece and her husband whenever he was able, and now and then to Boston also. But Philadelphia at the time of the Centennial was not to be thought of. "I sent my hymn," he wrote from Amesbury in 1876, "with many misgivings, and am glad it was so well received. I think I should like to have heard the music, but probably I should not have understood. The gods have made me most unmusical."

"I have just got J. T. F.'s charming little book of 'Barry Cornwall and His

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Friends.' It is a most companionable volume, and will give rare pleasure to thousands. . . . I write in the midst of our Quaker quarterly meeting, and our house has been overrun for three days. We had twelve to dine to-day; they have now gone to meeting, but I am too tired for preaching.

"I don't expect to visit Philadelphia. The very thought of that Ezekiel's vision of machinery and the nightmare confusion of the world's curiosity shop appalls me. I shall not venture."

He was full of excellent resolutions about going often to Boston, but he never could make a home there. "I see a great many more things in the city than thee does," he would say, "because I go to town so seldom. The shop-windows are a delight to me, and everything and everybody is novel and interesting. I don't need to go to the theatre. I have more theatre than I can take in every time I walk out."

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No sketch of Whittier, however slight, should omit mention of his friendship for Bayard Taylor. Their Quaker parentage helped to bring the two poets into communion; and although Taylor was so much the younger and more vigorous man, Whittier was also to see him pass, and to mourn his loss. He took a deep interest in his literary advancement, and considered "Lars" his finest poem. Certainly no one knew Taylor's work better, or brought a deeper sympathy into his reading of it. "I love him too well to be a critic of his verse," he says, in one of his letters. "But what a brave worker he was!"

The reading of good books was, very late in life, as it had been very early, his chief pleasure. His travels, his romance, his friendships, were indulged in chiefly by proxy of the printed page. "I felt very near Dr. Mulford through his writings," he said. "He was the strongest thinker of our time, and he thought in the right

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direction. 'The Republic of God' is intellectually greater than St. Augustine's 'City of God,' and infinitely nearer the Christian ideal."

"That must be a shrewd zephyr," Charles Lamb used to say, speaking of his Gentle Giantess, "that can escape her." And so we may say of Whittier and a book. "Has thee seen the new book by the author of 'Mr. Isaacs?'" he asked (having sent me "Mr. Isaacs" as soon as it appeared, lest I should miss reading so novel and good a story). In the same breath he adds: "I have been reading 'The Freedom of Faith,' by the author of 'On the Threshold,' just published by Houghton & Co. It is refreshing and tonic as the north-west wind. The writer is one of the leaders of the new departure from ultra-Calvinism. Thank thee just here for the pleasure of reading Annie Keary's biography. What a white, beautiful soul! Her views of the mission of Spiritualism seem very much like ——'s.

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I do not know when I have read a more restful, helpful book.

"How good Longfellow's poem is! A little sad, but full of 'sweetness and light.' Emerson, Longfellow, Holmes, and myself are all getting to be old fellows, and that swan-song might serve for us all. 'We who are about to die.' God help us all! I don't care for fame, and have no solicitude about the verdicts of posterity.

"'When the grass is green above us,
And they who know us and who love us
Are sleeping by our side,
Will it avail us aught that men
Tell the world with lip and pen
That we have lived and died?'

"What we *are* will then be more important than what we have done or said in prose or rhyme, or what folks that we never saw or heard of think of us."

Later he describes himself as listening to the "Life of Mrs. Stowe." "It is a satis-

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fying book, a model biography, or, rather, autobiography, for dear Mrs. Stowe speaks all through it. Dr. Holmes's letters reveal him as he is—wise, generous, chivalrous. Witness the kindliness and delicate sympathy of his letters during the Lord Byron trouble. . . . Miss W. has read us some of Howells's 'Hazard of New Fortunes.' It strikes me that it is a strong book. That indomitable old German, Linden—that saint of the rather godless sect of dynamiters and anarchists—is a grand figure; one can't help loving him."

The poet's notes and letters are full of passages showing how closely he followed public affairs. "If I were not sick, and to-morrow were not election-day," he says, "I should go to Boston. I hope to be there in a few days, at any rate. You must 'vote early and often,' and elect Hooper. Here we are having Marryat's triangular duel acted over by our three candidates. I wish they were all carpet-bagging among the Ku-kluxes. It

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wouldn't hurt us to go without a representative until we can raise one of our own.". . .

And again: "I am somewhat disappointed by the vote on the suffrage question. It should be a lesson to us not to trust to political platforms. A great many Republicans declined to vote for it or against it. They thought the leaders of the suffrage movement had thrown themselves into the hands of Butler and the Democrats. However, it is only one of those set-backs which all reforms must have — temporary, but rather discouraging."

"I worked hard in our town, and we made a gain of nearly one hundred votes over last year."

"I am happy," he says later, "in the result of the election—thankful that the State has sat down heavily on ——. I never thought of taking an active interest in politics this year, but I could not help it when the fight began."

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And still later in life: "I am glad of the grand overturn in Boston, and the courage of the women voters. How did it seem to elbow thy way to the polls through throngs of men folk?"

Whittier never relinquished his house at Amesbury, where his kind friends, Judge Cate and his wife, always made him feel at home. As the end of his life drew near, it was easy to see that the village home where his mother and his sister lived and died was the place he chiefly loved; but he was more inaccessible to his friends in Amesbury, and the interruptions of a fast-growing factory town were sometimes less agreeable to him than the country life at Oak Knoll. He was a great disbeliever in too much solitude, however, and used to say, "The necessary solitude of the human soul is enough; it is surprising how great that is."

Once only he expresses this preference for the dear old village home in his let-

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ters. "I have been at Amesbury for a fortnight. Somehow I seem nearer to my mother and sister; the very walls of the rooms seem to have become sensitive to the photographs of unseen presences."

Towards the end of his days, however, he spent more and more time with his beloved cousins Gertrude and Joseph Cartland, whose interests and aims in life were so close to his own.

The habit of going to the White Mountains in their company for a few weeks during the heat of summer was a fixed one. He grew to love Asquam, with its hills and lakes, almost better than any other place for this sojourn. It was there he loved to beckon his friends to join him. "Do come, if possible," he would write. "The years speed on; it will soon be too late. I long to look on your dear faces once more."

His deafness began to preclude general conversation; but he delighted in getting off under the pine-trees in the warm af-

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ternoons, or into a quiet room up-stairs at twilight, and talking until bedtime. He described to us, during one visit, his first stay among the hills. His parents took him where he could see the great wooded slope of Agamenticus. As he looked up and gazed with awe at the solemn sight, a cloud drooped, and hung suspended as it were from one point, and filled his soul with astonishment. He had never forgotten it. He said nothing at the time, but this cloud hanging from the breast of the hill filled his boyish mind with a mighty wonder, which had never faded away.

Notwithstanding his strong feeling for Amesbury, and his presence there always at "quarterly meeting," he found himself increasingly comfortable at Danvers and happy in the companionship of his devoted relatives. Something nearer "picturesqueness" and "the beautiful" came to please the sense and to soothe the spirit at Oak Knoll. He did not often

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VIEW FROM WHITTIER'S WINDOW, HAMPTON FALLS

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make record in his letters of these things; but once he speaks charmingly of the young girl in a red cloak, on horseback, with the dog at her side, scampering over the lawn and brushing under the sloping branches of the trees. The sunset of his life burned slowly down, yet in spite of illness and loss of power, he possessed his soul in patience. After a period when he felt unable to write, he revived and sent a letter, in which he spoke as follows of a poem which had been sent for his revision: "The poem is solemn and tender; it is as if a wind from the Unseen World blew over it, in which the voice of sorrow is sweeter than that of gladness—a holy fear mingled with holier hope. For myself, my hope is always associated with dread, like the shining of a star through mist. I feel, indeed, that Love is victorious, that there is no dark it cannot light, no depth it cannot reach; but I imagine that between the Seen and the Unseen there is a sort of neutral ground, a

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land of shadow and mystery, of strange voices and undistinguished forms. There are some, as Charles Lamb says, 'who stalk into futurity on stilts,' without awe or self-distrust. But I can only repeat the words of the poem before me." . . .

One of the last, perhaps the very last visit he made to his friends in Boston was in the beautiful autumn weather. The familiar faces he hoped to find were absent. He arrived without warning, and the very loveliness of the atmosphere which made it possible for him to travel had tempted younger people out among the falling leaves. He was disappointed, and soon after sent these verses to rehearse his experience:

"I stood within the vestibule
Whose granite steps I knew so well,
While through the empty rooms the bell
Responded to my eager pull.

"I listened while the bell once more
Rang through the void, deserted hall;

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I heard no voice, nor light foot-fall,
And turned me sadly from the door.

"Though fair was Autumn's dreamy day,
And fair the wood-paths carpeted
With fallen leaves of gold and red,
I missed a dearer sight than they.

"I missed the love-transfigured face,
The glad, sweet smile so dear to me,
The clasp of greeting warm and free:
What had the round world in their place?

"O friend, whose generous love has made
My last days best, my good intent
Accept, and let the call I meant
Be with your coming doubly paid."

But even this journey was beyond his strength. He wrote: "Coming back from Boston in a crowded car, a window was opened just behind me and another directly opposite, and, in consequence, I took a bad cold, and am losing much of this goodly autumnal spectacle. But Oak Knoll woods were never, I think, so beautiful before."

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In future his friends were to seek him; he could go no more to them; the autumn had indeed set in.

Now began a series of birthday celebrations, which were blessings not unmixed in his cup of life. He was in the habit of writing a brief note of remembrance on these anniversaries; in one of which, after confessing to "a feeling of sadness and loneliness," he turns to the Emerson Calendar, and says, "I found for the day some lines from his 'World Soul'—

> "'Love wakes anew this throbbing heart,
> And we are never old;
> Over the winter glaciers
> I see the summer glow,
> And through the wild piled snow-drift
> The warm rose-buds blow.'

Reading them, I took heart."

On another occasion he says: "In the intervals of visitation on that day my thoughts were with dear friends who have passed from us; among whom, I need not say, was thy dearest friend.

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How vividly the beautiful mornings with you were recalled! Then I wondered at my age, and if it was possible that I was the little boy on the old Haverhill farm, unknown, and knowing nobody beyond my home horizon. I could not quite make the connection of the white-haired man with the black-locked boy. I could not help a feeling of loneliness, thinking of having outlived many of my life-companions; but I was still grateful to God that I had not outlived my love for them and for those still living. Among the many tokens of good-will from all parts of the country and beyond the sea, there were some curious and amazing missives. One Southern woman took the occasion to include me in her curse of the 'mean, hateful Yankees.' To offset this, I had a telegram from the Southern Forestry Congress assembled in Florida, signed by president and secretary, informing me that 'In remembrance of your birthday, we have planted a live-oak tree to your

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memory, which, like the leaves of the tree, will be forever green.'"

Birthdays, on the whole, in the face of much sadness, brought him also much that was agreeable and delightful in remembrance. One old friend always gave him great pleasure by sending a huge basket of gilded wicker, in which were placed fruits of every variety from all quarters of the globe, and covered with rare flowers and ferns. In this way he visited the gardens of the Orient, and could see in his imagination the valleys of Napa and of Shiraz. On the occasion of a dinner given him at the Brunswick Hotel, on his seventieth birthday, he wrote: "I missed my friend. In the midst of so much congratulation, I do not forget his earlier appreciation and encouragement, and every kind word which assured and cheered me when the great public failed to recognize me. I dare not tell thee for fear of seeming to exaggerate how much his words have been to me."

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Thus the long years and the long days passed on with scarcely perceptible diminution of interest in the affairs of this world. "I am sorry to find that the hard winter has destroyed some handsome spruces I planted eight years ago," he wrote one May day; "they had grown to be fine trees. Though rather late for me, I shall plant others in their places; for I remember the advice of the old Laird of Dumbiedikes to his son Jock: 'When ye hae naething better to do, ye can be aye sticking in a tree; it 'll aye be growin' when ye are sleeping.' There is an ash-tree growing here that my mother planted with her own hands at threescore and ten. What agnostic folly to think that tree has outlived her who planted it!"

The lines of Whittier's life stretched "between heaven and home" during the long period of eighty-four years. A host of friends, friends of the spirit, were, as we have seen, forever clustering around him; and what a glorious company it

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was! Follen, Shipley, Chalkley, Lucy Hooper, Joseph Sturge, Channing, Lydia Maria Child, his sister Elizabeth—a shining cloud too numerous to mention; the inciters of his poems and the companions of his fireside. In the silence of his country home their memories clustered about him and filled his heart with joy.

"He loved the good and wise, but found
His human heart to all akin
Who met him on the common ground
Of suffering and of sin."

His "Home Ballads" grew out of this very power of clinging to the same places and the old loves, and what an incomparable group they make! "Telling the Bees," "Skipper Ireson's Ride," "My Playmate," "In School Days," are sufficient in themselves to set the seal to his great fame.

As a traveller, too, he is unrivalled, giving us, without leaving his own garden, the fine fruit of foreign lands. In

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reading his poems of the East, it is difficult to believe that he never saw Palestine, nor Ceylon, nor India; and the wonder is no less when he writes of our own wide country. Indeed, the vividness of his poems about the slaves at St. Helena's Island and elsewhere make them among the finest of all his local poems. One called "The Pass of the Sierra" may easily bear the palm among much descriptive writing.

He watched over his last remaining brother during a long illness and death, during the autumn and winter of 1882 and '83 in Boston. The family all left Oak Knoll and came to be with him at a hotel, whence he could make frequent visits to his brother's bedside; but the unwonted experience of passing several months in town, and the wearing mission which brought him there, told seriously upon his health, and caused well-grounded anxiety as to the result. The

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day after the last services had been performed he wrote to a friend: "Indeed, it was a great comfort to sit beside you and to feel that if another beloved one had passed into the new life beyond sight and hearing, the warm hearts of loved friends were beating close to my own. You do not know how grateful it was to me. Dr. Clarke's presence and words were full of comfort. My brother did not approve of a display of flowers, but he loved violets, and your simple flowers were laid in his hand. . . . Give my love to S., and kiss the dear child for me."

It was not, however, until 1890 that we could really feel he had left the years of active service and of intellectual achievement as things of the past. He was shut out from much that gave him pleasure, but the spirit which animated the still breathing frame, though waiting and at times longing for larger opportunity, seemed to us like a loving sentinel, covering his dear ones as with a shield, and

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watching over the needs of humanity. The advance of the colored people, the claims of the Indians and their wrongs, opportunities for women, statesmen, and politicians, the private joys and sorrows of those dear to him, were all present and kept alive, though in the silence of his breast.

The end came, the door opened while he was staying with the relative of an old friend at Hampton Falls, in New Hampshire—that saintly woman whom we associate with one of the most spiritual and beautiful of his poems, "A Friend's Burial." After a serious illness in the winter of 1892 he was almost too frail for any summer journeying, but with his usual wisdom and instinctive turning of the heart towards old familiar places, he thought of this hospitable house where he seemed to gain strength, and where he found much happiness and the quietness that he loved. His last illness was brief; he was ministered to by

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those who stood nearest him. And thus the waves of time passed over him and swept him from our sight.

It is a pleasure now to recall many a beautiful scene in summer afternoons, under the trees at Danvers, when his spirit animated the air and made the landscape shine with a radiance not its own. Such memories serve to keep the whole world beautiful wherein he moved, and add to his poetry a sense of presence and a living light.

Old age appears to every other stage of human existence as a most undesirable state. We look upon its approaches and its ravages with alarm. Death itself is far less dreadful, and "the low door," if it will only open quickly, brings little fear to the thoughtful mind. But the mystery of decadence, the long sunsetting, the loss of power—what do they mean? The Latin word *saga*, from which the French get *la sagesse*, and we "the sage," gives us a hint of what we do not

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always understand—the spiritual beauty and the significance even of loss in age.

Whittier, wearing his silver crown, brought the antique word into use again, and filled it with fresh meaning for modern men.

THE END

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JOHN G. WHITTIER
From a photograph taken in July, 1885

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